

President of the National Newspaper Association in 2010. She became only the fourth woman and second New Jersey in its 129-year history to lead the institution representing the interests of community newspapers. She also previously served as President of the New Jersey Press Association.

Her passion for her community extends beyond the newsroom with her service on the boards for the Morris County Habitat for Humanity, Morristown Festival of Books and membership in the Rotary Club of Madison.

I congratulate Elizabeth Parker on this well-deserved honor and thank her for the many years of dedicated public service to journalism in New Jersey and indeed the Nation.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE—THE NFL IS OUT OF BOUNDS

HON. TED POE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

Mr. POE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, abuse is never okay. It can never be justified, defended or explained. However, the message that the NFL sent last week says otherwise.

Recently, a video emerged of Baltimore Ravens' running back, Ray Rice, dragging his unconscious then-fiancée out of an elevator after allegedly punching her in the face several times.

Rice was charged with third-degree aggravated assault. However, prosecutors later dropped the charge after a plea deal was reached. But what is equally as troubling and disturbing is how the NFL chose to handle the situation.

The league suspended Rice for two games. This pathetic punishment is just a mere slap on the wrist. The NFL has issued harsher punishments for "offenses" such as eating unapproved foods or taking fertility drugs without approval.

For better or for worse, our society idolizes its athletes. In 2013, over 108 million Americans watched Rice help the Ravens win the Super Bowl. Thousands of young Americans wore Rice's jersey with pride. After this decision, would a high school athlete think twice before pushing around his girlfriend? Would the abused girlfriend even bother to come forward?

Sadly, the NFL seems to be more concerned with protecting its image than taking a stand and sending a strong message that violence against women will not be tolerated.

Ravens' head coach, John Harbaugh, called the attack, a "mistake."

Mr. Speaker, a mistake implies an accident. Punching your fiancée until she becomes unconscious is no accident nor should it be treated that way.

Our society has come a long way; domestic violence was once seen as a "family issue," not spoken of outside of the home. We have made some progress, but the NFL's actions show we still have a long way to go.

Those who commit violence against women—yes, even star football players—cannot get away with it. With the NFL's decision, another one just did. Abuse is never okay.

NFL greed, stardom and fame scores points over justice.

And that's just the way it is.

INTRODUCTION OF THE VA BONUS ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

HON. KYRSTEN SINEMA

OF ARIZONA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

Ms. SINEMA. Mr. Speaker, today Dr. DAN BENISHEK and I will introduce the VA Bonus Accountability Act. This bipartisan legislation claws back bonuses fraudulently paid to VA employees who manipulated wait times data.

The revelations that veterans at the Phoenix VA, and veterans at other VA facilities across the country, were placed on secret lists and had to wait months before seeing a doctor are immoral and un-American. That veterans who served our country honorably may have died while waiting for care is unconscionable. Those responsible for this disaster must be held accountable.

Ongoing audits by the VA and the VA Office of Inspector General reveal systemic problems with wait times, with the scheduling process, and with the honesty and integrity of the system. Evidence from multiple VA facilities shows intentional and systemic manipulation occurred to cover up long wait times and veteran deaths. Despite this misconduct and administrative failures, thousands of VA employees received bonuses for their performance.

In 2013, the VA awarded more than \$380,000 in bonuses to executives and directors at 38 VA hospitals where investigations were ongoing regarding increased delays in patient care and potential falsification of appointment records. Last year in total, the VA gave out \$2.7 million in extra pay to its top ranking officials.

Over the last three years, the Phoenix VA, ground zero for the VA scandal, paid out almost \$10 million in bonuses to its employees. All of this as patient wait times increased, data was intentionally manipulated, and whistleblowers were ignored or punished.

Our legislation requires the Secretary of Veterans Affairs, based on the findings of the VA Office of Inspector General and after notice and opportunity for a hearing, to order employees who contributed to the purposeful omission of veterans from electronic wait lists, and received a bonus in part because of such omission, to repay the bonus.

The first priority of the VA and Congress must be providing our veterans the care they need. Many dedicated VA employees, many of them veterans themselves, work tirelessly to provide the best care to our veterans, but they are limited by this broken system, which is failing millions of our veterans.

If we are going to change the culture at the VA so that veterans truly come first, we must also hold accountable those who intentionally manipulated wait times data and received bonuses based on this fraudulent data.

We urge our colleagues to cosponsor our legislation to bring accountability and change the corrosive culture at the VA.

INTRODUCTION OF THE "CLEARANCE AND OVER-CLASSIFICATION REFORM AND REDUCTION ACT" OR "CORRECT ACT"

HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 29, 2014

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to introduce legislation today titled the "Clearance and Over-Classification Reform and Reduction Act" or "CORRECT Act."

The CORRECT Act recognizes that the massive proliferation of original and derivative classified material and the exponential growth in the number of individuals with security clearances present significant homeland security and national security challenges that warrant timely action. In addition to the high costs incurred by the Federal government to investigate an unnecessarily large number of individuals for positions requiring security clearances, over-designations have undoubtedly resulted in the Federal government recruiting, hiring, and paying individuals at rates that are higher than necessary and not hiring individuals who otherwise have the required knowledge and skills.

The CORRECT Act amends the existing Reducing Over-Classification Act by (1) requiring the President to establish a goal for the reduction of classified information by not less than 10 percent within five years through improved declassification and improved original and derivative classification decision-making; (2) creating standardized sampling techniques for use by Federal departments and agencies conducting self-inspections to assess their progress at improving classification decision-making within their organizations; (3) creating annual training to each employee with original classification authority; and (4) requiring the Inspector General of each department or agency to report on the progress of each respective department or agency with respect to implementation of the Reducing Over-Classification Act as well as the President's 10 percent classified information reduction goal.

The CORRECT Act also includes a sense of Congress that a position should only be designated as requiring a security clearance when it requires access to classified information, presents a risk of a material, adverse effect on the national security, or is a position of public trust for any agency that has the authority to issue security clearances.

Additionally, the CORRECT Act sets forth specific reforms at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to make it a leader among Federal agencies with respect to security clearance practices. The reforms at DHS are targeted at the designation, investigation, adjudication, denial, suspension, revocation, and appeals processes. In particular, to increase transparency and improve performance among investigation service providers, including Office of Personnel Management, it requires the DHS Secretary to publish on the Department's website an annual Department-wide satisfaction survey. If a pattern of performance problems with a particular investigation service provider emerges, the DHS Chief Security Officer is required to make a recommendation to the Secretary regarding corrective action, including suspension or cancelation of services.